

Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

www.iowadnr.com

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1. Deer hunters Asked to Aid Needy Iowans
2. Landowners, Deer Hunters Meet on DNR Website
3. Early Migration is Underway – by Joe Wilkinson [Hold this story until Aug. 26]

Help Us Stop Hunger, Again

DEER HUNTERS ASKED TO AID NEEDY IOWANS

DES MOINES - Iowa deer hunters may be among the state's most benevolent. More than ever, they are being encouraged to harvest more deer to curb the herd's growth, and while they are at it, they are also prompted to give the deer they don't need at home to the Help Us Stop Hunger (HUSH) program.

In its first year last year, HUSH collected more than 1,600 deer, donated by hunters to any of about 30 lockers, yielding about 80,000 pounds of ground venison, or more than 300,000 meals to customers of social service agencies in central Iowa. The Food Bank of Iowa coordinated the pick-up and delivery of venison, and administered payments to the lockers for processing the deer.

"There has never been such a win-win program for those-in-need, for hunters, for lockers, and for deer population control," claimed Jeff Vonk, director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, who initiated HUSH last year.

"Not only did hunters donate 1,600 deer, but about 4,000 hunters each gave \$5 to HUSH when they purchased their deer permit, helping us to pay lockers for the processing," said Vonk. Hunters who donate deer to HUSH are still required to have a legal deer permit, but that extra \$5 they can choose to pay when they buy the permit is a voluntary contribution.

According to DNR's Ross Harrison who manages HUSH with the Food Bank, the HUSH quota is being increased to 2,000 deer this year and payments to lockers are going to \$55 per deer. Harrison said HUSH is hopeful that 5,000 to 6,000 hunters will give \$5 this year to meet the increase in deer and costs.

Lockers last year got \$50 per deer for processing and the Food Bank \$5 per deer for distribution and administration, for a total HUSH cost of \$88,000. The DNR promoted HUSH and raised most of the money from hunters, donors and its own budget. Major donors giving \$3,000 or more included the Farm Bureau, Hunter Specialties, Knight Rifles, Whitetails Unlimited, Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance and Iowa Bow Hunters Association.

The list of lockers accepting donated deer and more information is on the website: www.iowahush.com.

For more information, contact: ross.harrison@dnr.state.ia.us, 515-281-5973

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LANDOWNERS, DEER HUNTERS MEET ON DNR WEBSITE

CHARITON - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is playing high-tech matchmaker pairing hunters willing to harvest antlerless deer with landowners who want deer numbers on their property reduced.

Hunters willing to harvest does are encouraged to fill out an electronic form on the DNR's wildlife page. The electronic form can be found by clicking on the wildlife damage link in the left menu bar from any of the wildlife pages. The form will debut Aug. 26.

The form takes a few minutes to complete and has questions like where in Iowa do you like to hunt, which season(s) and the type of firearm preferred. Landowners review the information and choose a hunter and make the call. It's short and sweet.

"Believe it or not, in some Iowa counties, landowners actually complain about the lack of deer hunting pressure," said Bill Bunger, wildlife depredation biologist for the DNR. Bunger travels most of the state each year investigating deer damage complaints.

"Landowners frequently tell me they either can't recruit enough hunters or have a hard time finding hunters willing to harvest additional does," Bunger said. "Hopefully, this new list will get hunters and landowners together."

The information is automatically entered in a database. Landowners can review the list as often as they want to look for new entries.

“This is a good opportunity for people looking to expand their deer hunting by either hunting an additional season or in a new part of the state,” Bunger said. “We definitely have the need, now it’s up to the hunters.”

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[Hold this story until Aug. 26]

EARLY MIGRATION IS UNDERWAY

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Pelicans? In Iowa?

That’s the reaction from many people, as they watch those big birds wheeling in formation in the sky or packed tightly together on the water. Snow white, with black patches on their broad wings, their trademark orange pouch doesn’t show up from a distance. Aim a spotting scope as they sit in the shallows or look as they dip close to the ground and you can see the big birds’ oversized, almost cartoonish features.

Many Iowans connect pelicans with the oceans, or some faraway place. While the smaller, *brown* pelican is common on the Gulf, Pacific and lower Atlantic coasts, its larger, white cousin nests in western Canada and in larger lake regions in the western U.S. and is a regular migrant through Iowa in spring and fall. Hundreds of them have appeared on Coralville Reservoir in the last week or two. Just Sunday evening, there must have been 700 to 800 or so spread across a bay just off the main water. They’re also showing up on other waters; an oversized reminder that the fall migration that is already underway. Snowy egrets, a couple green herons and extra blue herons dot the shoreline and dead trees here as the push south begins.

“We are seeing lots of shorebirds already. We’ve had a number of reports of pelicans, too,” agrees wildlife biologist Bruce Ehresman. From the Department of Natural Resources’ wildlife diversity program, he keeps tabs on the twice-a-year influx of feathered migrants through Iowa. “We have heard that there was a horrible nesting season in parts of Canada; cold, wet conditions,” explains Ehresman. “Birds that might not have brought off a brood are on their way south already. We are getting a lot of shorebirds, yellowlegs, lesser yellowlegs; a number of sandpipers.”

How long will they stay? “It depends on weather conditions,” admits Ehresman. “Many species depend on the mudflats. As water levels recede, (those flats) dry out. If we get rain, that will keep the shorter legged shorebirds; like least sandpipers, there hunting for invertebrates. Avocets and other longer legged shorebirds will be in shallows.” The raucous calls of Canada geese going to bed are getting a little louder. Many are residents, ranging a little afield, but a few northerners are bolstering the mix. Small flocks of teal lead the invasion of waterfowl.

A few early songbirds, too, have packed it in and are moving south. “I suspect in the next couple weeks, more warblers will be showing up; more vireos, too,” predicts Ehresman. “We are also seeing more birds now, as the young of the year grow. Hummingbirds, mourning doves, late season nesters like the goldfinches. The young birds are showing up at the feeders.”

I’ve had steady customers all summer at the two hummingbird feeders in my yard. Traffic was nonstop during the cool weather earlier in August. The lack of sharp chirps and fights indicates it is the same few local birds, with no migrants muscling in yet. “It was a weird year for hummingbirds,” reports Ronda Wilson, owner of Coralville’s Birds Eye View store. “People are kind of disappointed they haven’t been seeing them. It might be due to the early rain. They still are not seeing them.”

While a few folks maintain backyard feeders year round, interest will pick up in a few weeks, as we look ahead to winter feeding. Local birds will be in good shape, as their fall migration begins. Late summer/early fall feeding will attract arriving migrants, too. “Those birds want to establish feeding areas as soon as they arrive,” emphasizes Wilson. “The white-throated sparrow, for instance, usually shows up about the second week of September. It’s a good idea to start setting up for them, now.” Wilson suggests stocking suet feeders, too, noting that a variety of species—rely on the high energy food source during migration.

At this moment, about 200 pelicans are wheeling overhead, some as close as 150 yards. Whether you grab the binoculars and go...or just pause and enjoy the sight, the fall migration has begun. Enjoy it.

Fall Viewing Gets Serious

Organized wildlife watching opportunities are growing in number each year. The latest U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife-Associated Recreation survey shows more than a million people engage in wildlife viewing in Iowa each year, in addition to nearly 800,000 who hunt and fish, but also take part in ‘watching’ as a secondary activity.

Newspaper Travel and Feature sections, as well as various outdoor recreation and club websites and newsletters can keep you busy all fall.

Among some of the better known Iowa events are;

September 24-26 - HawkWatch (Effigy Mounds National Monument near Marquette. Call 563-873-3491 for information). Experienced volunteers help visitors spot up to 17 species of hawks, eagles, falcons and other birds of prey as they ride updrafts through the Mississippi River corridor. Watch hawk banding and other programs, too.

September 12 - Pelican Festival (Saylorville Reservoir, 515-323-5300). Sometimes, thousands of pelicans are viewable during early September. Spotting scopes and special programs are available, as well.

Late Fall - Snow Goose Viewing. (Riverton Unit, Iowa DNR 712-387-2791) Enormous concentrations—as in hundreds of thousands—of snow geese stage here in November, on their way south. Repeats again in the spring. Hunters and wildlife watchers are often left in awe, after seeing the clouds of geese lift off or land.

Bird Conservation Areas (BCAs). Iowa has six dedicated areas where birds can be viewed extensively in natural settings. Some feature ‘improvements’, such as viewing platforms, but don’t offer formal, staffed programs. They include:

- Iowa River Corridor, Tama/Iowa Counties
- Kellerton, Ringgold County
- Spring Run, Dickinson County
- Broken Kettle Grasslands, Plymouth County
- Effigy Mounds/Yellow River Forest, Allamakee/Clayton Counties
- Union Hills, Cerro Gordo County

For information on Iowa’s BCAs, call 515-432-2823.

Native Grass Field Day at Hawkeye Area

A Monday field day will demonstrate native grass plantings and weed control methods. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources, ISU Extension and Pheasants Forever are hosting the August 30, 6 p.m. session, on the Hawkeye Wildlife Area. The field plots, one tallgrass and forb mix, one shortgrass and forbs, are three miles west of the Hawkeye Area office and shop, on Amana Road NW, in Johnson County.

Presenters will show how to incorporate native prairie grass seedings and how to control reed’s canarygrass and Canada thistle through mowing and chemical means.

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